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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/519,101	08/18/2005	John Francis Boulton	15309.0002	9494
27890 7590 03/08/2007 STEPTOE & JOHNSON LLP 1330 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W. WASHINGTON, DC 20036			EXAMINER KEEFE, STEPHEN L	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3671	
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE		MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE	
3 MONTHS		03/08/2007	PAPER	

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/519,101	BOULTON, JOHN FRANCIS	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Stephen L. Keefe	3671	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 August 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 and 9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 and 9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 27 December 2004 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.


Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 12/7/2005.

- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____


RAYMOND ADDIE
PRIMARY EXAMINER

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

1. The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(b) because they are incomplete.

37 CFR 1.83(b) reads as follows:

When the invention consists of an improvement on an old machine the drawing must when possible exhibit, in one or more views, the improved portion itself, disconnected from the old structure, and also in another view, so much only of the old structure as will suffice to show the connection of the invention therewith.

Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action.

In order to be complete, the drawings should show the elongation and retraction of the bridge with respect to the stowage assembly. Use drawings that show the whole invention; show the elongation and retraction with drawings of the ramps and access means attached to the stowage assembly. See Bingham et al. (US 1,593,999), Figure 1 for an illustration of the type of drawing required.

The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

2. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: The phrase "are the deployed" (page 1, line 27) should be —are in the deployed—.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Objections

3. Claims 3, 5, and 8 are objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 5 is objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c) as being in improper form because a multiple dependent claim should refer to other claims in the alternative only. See MPEP § 608.01(n).

The phrase "said housing body" (claim 3, lines 1-2) lacks antecedent basis and should be —a housing body—. (Note: Since claim 3 depends from claim 1, antecedent basis cannot come from claim 2)

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The phrase "of each unit are the deployed" (claim 8, line 4) should be –of each unit are in the deployed—.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

6. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1 and 3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Bingham et al. (US 1,593,999).

Bingham et al. discloses a bridging unit comprising:

A stowage housing (11a, 11b) which in use is disposed to one side of the zone, a spanning assembly (10a, 10b) operatively mounted to the stowage housing (11a, 11b) for movement between a stowed position and a deployed position in which it at least partially traverses the bridging zone in an elevated position, and deployment means (21-23a&b) operable to cause movement of the spanning assembly between the stowed and deployed positions (page 1, lines 60-64, 77-81).

Regarding claim 3, Bingham et al. discloses a bridging unit wherein a housing body (11a, 11b) includes a box-like structure having peripheral side walls (13a, 13b) and a top

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wall (17a, 17b), said top wall (17a, 17b) forming a platform from which the spanning assembly (10a and 10b) is accessed when in the deployed position (page 1, lines 60-66 and Figure 1).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 2 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bingham et al. ('999) in view of Rohrs et al. (US 4,084,713).

Bingham et al. discloses essentially all that is claimed as applied to claim 1, but does not disclose a receiving compartment.

However, Rohrs et al. teaches it is known to provide a stowage housing including a housing body (28) having a compartment therein for at least partially receiving a spanning assembly or access means when in the stowed position (column 2, lines 25-27 and Figure 1). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the bridging unit disclosed by Bingham et al. to have a receiving compartment, as taught by Rohrs et al., so that "the ramp is completely retractable," facilitating easy movement of the bridging unit to a new location (column 1, lines 34-37).

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Regarding claim 4, Bingham et al. discloses essentially all that is claimed as applied to claim 3, but does not disclose an access means.

However, Rohrs et al. teaches it is known to provide a stowage housing including an access means (10) operatively mounted to the stowage housing for movement between a stowed position and a deployed position (column 2, lines 25-27 and Figure 1). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the bridging unit disclosed by Bingham et al. to have an access means that can be moved into a stowed position, as taught by Rohrs et al., so that "the ramp is completely retractable," facilitating easy movement of the bridging unit to a new location (column 1, lines 34-37).

8. Claims 5, 6, and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bingham et al. ('999) in view of Mampaey (US 3,875,603).

Bingham et al. discloses a bridging unit comprising a spanning assembly including a path section (10a, 10b) which in the deployed position is disposed in end to end relation to a second path section (17a, 17b) and in the stowed position is disposed (in a generally upright configuration) side by side to the second path section (17a, 17b), the two sections being movable relative to one another between the stowed and deployed positions (page 1, lines 60-64, 77-81 and Figure 1).

What Bingham et al. does not disclose is that the second path section is a passage section.

However, Mampaey teaches it is known to provide a bridging unit having a passage section located within a housing (2), the passage section capable of vertical movement in the housing (2). See column 3, lines 24-29 and Figure 1. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the bridging unit disclosed by Bingham et al. to have a passage section in the housing, as taught by Mampaey, to account for differences in height and "provide for convenient and safe passage" between changes in elevation (column 1, lines 42-45).

Regarding claim 9, Bingham et al. discloses a bridging unit comprising two bridging units, the stowage housing (11a, 11b) of each unit being disposed on respective opposite sides of the bridging zone, the arrangement being such that when the spanning assembly (10a, 10b) of each unit are in the deployed position they are operatively connected to one another (page 1, lines 60-64 and page 2, lines 5-7).

Response to Amendment

9. Updating foreign priority claim is acknowledged.

Conclusion

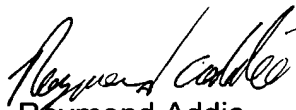
10. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Serrano (US 4,162,551), Mittag (US 4,118,816), Witkin (US 5,870,788), Nichols et al. (US 4,779,298), Agren (US 2,449,829), Ebeling (US 1,733,587), and Ebeling (US 1,674,279) provide additional concepts for bridging units.

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11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stephen L. Keefe whose telephone number is 571-272-5652. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Thomas B. Will can be reached on 571-272-6998. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


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SLK
3/1/07